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LBST 2101-415

Ms. Bauerle

Modern Witchcraft in Media: Charmed

The film that I was selected to view is *Charmed. Charmed* is a fictionalized television show based around three sisters who live in midtown San Francisco. The show starts with a series of supernatural events that lead the sisters into the attic where they find the book of shadows and are awarded their powers. Each of the sister's posses their own individual powers which they are to use to protect the people of their city. The sisters are known as "The Charmed Ones" to most and known as the "Hallowell's" to everyone else. The trio of sisters come together throughout this television series to battle warlocks and other evil forces that try to kill them and corrupt their city. As the show progresses and the sisters grow older, their powers become even stronger and they eventually become the most powerful good witches in history, especially when they come together as one.

In this show the three sisters Prue, Piper, and Phoebe all learned very quickly that their powers were to not be shared or put on display. Each of these sisters shared a few traits but also had a few that were very different for each individual. The most noticeable of the characteristics that they shared was their mid length black hair, the were all mid-aged (around 23), they all were attractive women, and they all were searching for a man. Though they did have these things in common, there are many things that they did not have in common. The first of these things is their personalities. Prue, the oldest sister is a very dominant and independent woman who is not afraid to do what she feels is right regardless of who she may hurt. With that being said, she is the way she is only to protect her younger sisters. The next sister is Piper. For the most part,

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Piper is a reserved character who acts solely as a mediator between her two sisters. Piper is easily the mediator due to the fact that she leads towards no certain extremes and is only wanting back the feeling of a normal life. The youngest sister is Phoebe. Phoebe is a very loving, boy crazy character who often is in conflict with the oldest sister, Prue. Within the first few episodes it easy to tell that Phoebe is the youngest, mainly because of her innocent demeanor. The next and main characteristic that differs among the sisters is the powers that they were awarded once they received their powers. Prue has the power of telekinesis, which basically means that she can move objects with her mind. Piper has the power to freeze time. This power becomes a life saver in the second episode as Piper uses this power stop her date who was a warlock from stabbing her in an elevator. Phoebe has the power of premonition, which is the power to see into the future. This power is very useful in the first few episode as Phoebe uses this to stop her neighbors from stealing the book of shadows and to even save her own life from a life sucking warlock. Once originally awarded these powers, the sisters are overly open with them. For example, at one point Phoebe uses her premonition to tell an elderly couple the winning numbers for an upcoming lottery and then tries to use the numbers for herself. Phoebe quickly learns that she cannot use the powers for personal satisfaction. Also, Piper uses her power of freezing time in her restaurant kitchen and almost blows their cover when she realizes that only the people in the kitchen were frozen. After encountering their first warlock, the girls quickly realize that their powers are not to be publicly used. The girls eventually began to only use their powers in their house or while they were battling evil forces.

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In this show there are many ways in which I feel witchcraft is accurately portrayed along with many times where it is not accurate. One of the ways that witchcraft is accurately portrayed is through the rituals that the sisters perform and the ritual that their grandmother is performing at the beginning of the first episode. As the show progresses, one of the sisters has a child and performs a wiccaning. A wiccaning is a ceremony for newly born witches that is performed by a priest and is meant to call the ancestors of the family to watch over and protect the child. Many times in the shows a triquetra is shown, which is a symbol of life, death, and rebirth. This symbol also represents the three elements of nature, earth, air, and water. A few of the times when this symbol is shown include in the previews of every episode, on the collar of the cat that randomly shows up in episodes, and on the trunk in the attic. The girls also find a witch book that is called the book of shadows. This is accurate to real witchcraft because the book of shadows is the equivalent of a spell book, as it lists all of the spells that the sisters can perform. Another way that this show is accurate is through the mention of the moon phases. At one point in the second episode when the girls are learning more and more about their powers, they read that the phases of the moon can effect their magic. The phases of the moon are important because it is best to do certain spells during certain phases. An example of this would be that it is best to use spells to banish people during a waning moon and it is best to cast any spell during a full moon because it is when the magic is most powerful. The final time that the accurateness of this show stood out to me was in episode two when Piper was speaking with the priest. At one point in their conversation Piper goes on to ask the question of what should she say to her friend that may be a

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witch, the answer she received from the priest is Exodus 22:18 which states "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live." I found this to be very accurate because in class discussions earlier this year, this verse stuck out to me. This verse stands out to me because it is in my opinion the most effective and appropriate way for a priest to state their stand on witchcraft and I feel that its occurrence was very prevalent back in the days of the Salem witch trials.

Though there are many ways in which this show is accurate, there are also ways in which it is inaccurate. The main way that this is so is because of the very unrealistic scenes. A few of these scenes include when the warlocks blew up doors, used x-ray vision to suck the life out of witches, or even when they shape shifted into objects such as birds and other people. A few times in the show, the sisters come together and use the power of three to either make the warlocks or demons melt or explode. I feel this is inaccurate because this is not how the powers of the witches were really used. Originally, witches used rituals or spells to help a harvest or to heal the sick. This show overplays the powers that witches really did have. Also, the powers are inaccurate because it is impossible to freeze time or even move things with your mind. While watching the show I did not notice many stereotypes in particular but I did notice at one point the mention of flying on brooms. This comment was made out of sarcasm and I feel that this is good because it is attempting to do away with the stereotypes that media has created of witches.

As I watched this show I tried to look out for historical references but only recall hearing of one. The reference that I remember was of one of the ancestors of the sisters, Melinda Warren. Melinda was the first of these good witches. Before being burned at the stake in the Salem Trials,

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Melinda prophesized that the sisters would eventually come together and form the power of three, making them the most powerful in the history of good witches. After watching the episodes that I did, I feel that this show is made for all audiences. I feel this way because it has a little bit of everything. It has drama, factual realistic information, and even overly dramatized action. I feel that the factual information will get the attention of the knowledgeable witch enthusiasts but will not be too deep for the uneducated teen to understand. I really enjoyed viewing this show and I feel that it is a realistic portrayal of witchcraft aside from the excessive action scenes.

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